

## How the Best Leaders Build Trust

Almost everywhere we turn, trust is on the decline. Trust in our culture at large, in our institutions and in our companies is significantly lower than a generation ago. Research shows that only 49 percent of employees trust senior management and only 28 percent believe that CEOs are a credible source of information.

### Building Trust

The first job of any leader is to inspire trust. Trust is confidence born of two dimensions: character and competence. Character includes one's integrity, motive and intent with people. Competence includes their capabilities, skills, results and track record. Both dimensions are vital.

### Four Cores of Credibility

There are Four Cores of Credibility, and it's about all four cores working in tandem—Integrity, Intent, Capabilities and Results. Part of building trust is creating understanding – clarifying what the organization wants and what leaders can offer them. Be the one that does that best. Then add to your credibility the kind of behavior that builds trust (see box below). Next, take it beyond just you as the leader and extend it to the entire organization. The combination of that type of credibility and behavior and organizational alignment results in a culture of high trust.

#### 13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders Worldwide

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Talk straight.       | 8. Confront reality.        |
| 2. Demonstrate respect. | 9. Clarify expectation.     |
| 3. Create transparency. | 10. Practice accountability |
| 4. Right wrongs.        | 11. Listen first.           |
| 5. Show loyalty.        | 12. Keep commitments.       |
| 6. Deliver results.     | 13. Extend trust.           |
| 7. Get better.          |                             |

Remember that the 13 behaviors always need to be balanced by each other (e.g., talk straight needs to be balanced with demonstrate respect) and that any behavior pushed to the extreme can become a weakness.

**Self-Trust:** the confidence one has in one's self in the ability to set and achieve goals, to keep commitments, to walk your talk and with one's ability to inspire trust in others.

The job of a leader is to extend trust first. Not a blind trust without exceptions and accountability; rather a "smart trust" with clear expectations and strong accountability built into the process. The best leaders always lead out with a decided propensity to trust, as opposed to a propensity not to trust.

The best leaders recognize that trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year. I am convinced that in every situation, nothing is as fast as the speed of trust.

*Reference: Covey, Stephen M.R., Society for HR Mgmt., How the Best Leaders Build Trust*